Marine Corps Recruiting Incumbency And The Disruptive Internet

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Executive Summary

Title: Marine Corps Recruiting Incumbency and the Disruptive Internet

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Thesis: Comforted by its military recruiting incumbency, the Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) believes the other military services' rush to attain strong Internet presence is not worth joining. This thesis posits a strong and relevant Internet presence, focused between the Marine Recruiter and the recruitable public, will add tremendous value to the Corps' recruiting efforts.

Background: Throughout the 1970's and 80's, the Marine Corps incorporated some non-traditional recruiting methods, centered on better business practices, and slowly overcame disruptive generational change. This thesis understands a different environment for change exists. There is currently a revolution in business affairs (RBA) and revolution in military affairs (RMA) centered on the Information Age. But, as the military recruiting incumbent, the Corps is not under unusual pressure to execute substantial change within its recruiting force to capture the potential of these revolutions.

The Internet is a potentially disruptive force that Marine Corps recruiting must contend with. Principally, the in-coming recruitable population is beginning to make the Internet their entertainment and communication medium of choice, and it is the fastest growing segment of an exponentially growing Net population. The Marine Corps Warfighting Lab's research established the in-coming generation may not identify with the military, but the generation happens to exhibit many values associated with the military. Key to recruiting this generation will be bridging these parallel values. The in-coming generation's media center of gravity is the Internet, and the generation is establishing preferences and expectations through the use of this new medium. Besides the Internet, the Corps' public presence is becoming ever more diluted in light of a shrinking pool of former military members, a vibrant economy, limited threats to national security, and the growing mass media malaise distracting the recruitable population. These and recent retention shortfalls should concern the Corps.

One recruiting fundamental must remain the antecedent for any change – Marines recruit Marines and Marine Recruiters, the MCRC centers of gravity, do it most efficiently and effectively. The Recruiter's "personal touch" makes all the difference. Currently, MCRC conducts a policy maintaining a small, central Internet recruiting presence. This presence is small and mainly disassociated from the recruiting force in the field. It fails to allow Recruiters to interact with the online culture – a culture that values anonymity and speed. Currently, the Marine Recruiter is operating without most of the Information Age technology, which when multitasked, along with a hybridized, Recruiter Internet presence, can convey relevance and knowledge that supports recruitment in a real-time, anytime, always on but personal manner.

Recommendation: It is recommended the Marine Corps adopt a stronger Internet recruiting presence based upon the descriptive and prescriptive suggestions in this thesis.

INTRODUCTION

The United States Marine Corps is the only military service in recent years to meet its recruiting goals. While the other military services lower standards and attempt new recruiting methods,[1] including Internet recruiting, the Corps raises the bar on recruiting standards while adopting only a token Internet presence. Comforted by this military recruiting incumbency, the Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) believes the other military services' rush to attain strong Internet recruiting presence is not worth joining. Today, businesses that lack Internet presence may fall prey to the creation of new markets and risk losing market dominance.[2] The Corps is taking such a chance with the in-coming recruitable market.

This thesis posits a strong and relevant Internet presence, focused between the Marine Recruiter and the recruitable public, will add tremendous value to the Corps' recruiting effort. The Corps must examine how it can lead its recruiting organization to thrive, vice merely sustain itself, into the Information Age. The Internet is a potentially disruptive force in today's information society because it can rapidly dismantle mass-markets and build niche markets into new growth markets. Principally, the recruitable population is beginning to make the Internet their entertainment and communication medium of choice.

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[1] R.D.Coleman, Major, USMC, *Recruiting the Strategic Corporal*, Marine Corps Command and Staff College thesis, AY 1998-99 (Quantico, VA: 1999), 24.

[2] The following assessment is based on the author's top-sight gained from reading both *Forbes* and *Forbes ASAP* from cover to cover for the past four years.   The Information Age is transforming the recruitable market. The disruptive technology behind this is the Internet. Organizations that fail to adopt new technologies or methods are losing market share, becoming irrelevant, or transforming through merger etc…. The crux is that new markets of the Internet Age are developing and a further challenge comes from the Internet speeding up the frequency of new methods to engage these markets. *Forbes* and *Forbes ASAP* are replete with companies, many incumbents in their markets, failing to maintain relevant organizations or market share in the fast paced Information Age.

Four questions are worth consideration. First, why does MCRC need to concern itself with the Internet? Second, does the Information Age and its dominant tool, the Internet, possibly pose any potentially disruptive threats to Marine Corps recruiting? Third, does the Internet offer MCRC significant growth opportunity? Finally, if the latter questions are affirmed, what are some courses of action to overcome the Internet's disruptive challenges and capitalize on a potential growth opportunity? Obviously, any recommendations must be considered in light of the Corps' nature and theory of recruitment.

These questions warrant consideration in the context of 1) the lessons the Corps learned in its rise to dominance in military recruitment, and 2) reviewing the nature of both Marine Corps recruiting and the Internet. Incorporating change into any institution should always include understanding the nature behind the institution and any change agent the institution adopts, especially if that agent carries potential disruptive change.

Institutionally, the Corps is at a crossroads with utilizing the Internet, managing the infinite information it provides, and incorporating computer technology. Although the Corps establishes institutional web sites, incorporates service-wide email and, essentially connects all its computers to an institutional intra- and extra-net, there remains uncertainty on how best to use the Internet and manage information within the Marine Corps. Attempting to develop information management doctrine, the Marine Corps Combat Development Center is finding out that the facets of the Information Age are "moving targets," which are hard to fix on a doctrinal template.[3] The rapid changes surrounding information technology, the resulting difficult learning curve accompanying it, and the challenge to develop Institutional policies to incorporate information

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[3] L. K. Brown, Colonel, USMC, "Marine Corps Doctrine," lecture presented at the U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Quantico, VA, 10 December 1999.

technology are examples of how the Internet revolution presents the Corps with institutional challenges.[4]

MCRC continues to enjoy the dominant position within the military recruiting arena. Taking a cautious approach, the command intends to establish only a small Internet presence. This presence will not leverage virtual recruiting or other possible Internet venues that could lend additional support to an overworked but proud and successful recruiting force at large.

Besides the comfort zone afforded by recruiting incumbency, institutional leadership may be imposing a dilemma in adopting a profitable Internet posture. Junior leaders who value the Information Age tools can find themselves stifled by senior leadership attitudes and the indifference of peers whose comfort zones remain tied to their leadership mainstreams. For instance, a USMC Major General interrupted a lecture at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College (CSC) to bring up the organizational challenges associated with email and online information. He exclaimed to the students, "d--- computers are killing us, all this data is great but there is no chain-of-command." Many in the audience applauded. He then went on to extol the virtue behind improving our knowledge of geography.

Following the General's impromptu pep talk, one could not help but imagine the choices available in light of the General's geography focus. A student could submit a point paper up their CSC chain-of-command, requesting a change to the course syllabus to improve student geography aptitudes. Or, the student could anytime, anywhere, get on

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[4] General Electric's Chairmen Jack Welch recognized late the dramatic implications of the Internet. Understanding the older generation of his company had to "get on-board" with the new medium, he took dramatic and revolutionary action. "To alter the situation, GE started a mentoring program for nearly 1,000 senior executives. Younger members of the GE staff, proficient in the ways of the new electronic world, were assigned to teach a senior executive how to use the Internet." Frank Swoboda, "A Late Realization Draws General Electric Into the Net," *Washington Post*, 5 April 2000, G17.

their "d--- computer," log onto the Internet and pull down more geographic, demographic, and historic information than the well-intentioned General could ever imagine. A student could not only obtain geographic data, he or she could get aesthetic information, like art as well. In addition to this geographic information, the Internet can help move any user to an understanding of the people in most places in the world. The student can interact with the people of those countries through Usenet chat rooms and various Internet-based interactive media. The next best thing to being there can be made possible through the Internet. Not only can people gain content, they can interact with other Internet end-users and put the content into context. Knowledge can be afforded through the use of the Internet.

Essentially, the Internet is a conduit that offers powerful leverage to obtain information and interact with people anytime and anyplace. A lack of understanding of the Internet and its various applications, as well as the laurel of success, should not place MCRC in a dilemma, resulting in a token Internet presence. The American public's presence on the Internet is growing dramatically, even exponentially, over time. If the public is there in force, and it is, then the Corps should be recruiting on the Internet in force. The key is efficiently and effectively assimilating the full potential of the Internet into a recruiting organization already possessing a winning nature and theory of recruitment.

CHAPTER 1

MARINE CORPS RECRUITING MEETS THE INFORMATION AGE

The United States Marine Corps gradually developed its top-recruiting establishment over three decades.   Since 1970, the Corps failed during several periods to meet recruiting goals. However, the transition out of the Vietnam War created opportunities to grow. The Corps steadily incorporated some irregular methods, drawn from outside the Corps' traditional principles, in order to improve recruiting. Defining the traditional recruiting principals and a review of the new methods being used are essential in establishing a departure point for the next transition – a transition the Information Age is "forcing upon" Marine Corps recruiting.

Before the Vietnam War, the Corps established recruiting principles, which remain in place today. The concepts of this foundation, consistent with the Corps' beginning, remain timelessly and consistently employed. It is a constancy of purpose centered on a former Marine Corps' Commandant's expression that "the Marine <u>IS</u> the Corps."

First, outside of the beginning moments of the Corps at Tun Tavern, Philadelphia, **only Marines recruit and make Marines**. In times of conscription, a Marine Drill Instructor remained the gatekeeper between the title and those required to attempt attaining it.

Next, **the Corps' is branded by the Marine persona – a legendary, even mythical warfighter**. The title, *Marine*, must be earned in accordance with its tradition as a challenge. The Corps advertises these images using metaphors linking the legendary past or challenging a mythical future. These images promise the intangible values of the title, *Marine*. Examples include, "We're Looking for a Few Good Men," "The Few,"

"The Proud," and "Transformation" with virtual computer reality creating images of knights clashing and dragons slain in the fight between the forces of good and evil.

The other military services brand their image by challenging potential recruits with pragmatic tangibles. The Army touts, "Be All You Can Be," and the Air Force beckons, "Aim High," in the midst of flouting and promising essential civilian job skills. However, the *Air Force Times* recently reported the U.S. Air Force now recognizes this approach as a mistake. The Air Force is attempting to re-brand itself out of the present "9 to 5" career pattern image in order to underscore their proud contribution and future as a critical warfighting organization.[5] Included in the effort to maintain its timeless brand image remains the Corps' institutional penchant to defend it.

The Corps cannot depend solely on its history of sacrifice and battlefield victories to establish a positive public image. The Corps' perception control and management maintain public support and communicate the organization's relevancy. The effort plays on recruitment. Under this premise, the Commandant of the Marine Corps is the Corps' chief recruiter. At times, this means standing on principles while finessing political or societal issues. As Commandant, General Alexander Vandergrift's "no bended knee" speech to Congress offset attempts to disband the Corps in 1945.[6] The most recently retired Commandant, General Charles Krulak, made an "honor, courage, and commitment are not extreme" retort in 1998, to the Assistant Secretary of the Army in response to her attempt to defame the Corps' image.[7] Though the warfighter image and the requisite core value base accompanying those values may be seemingly brash or,

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[5] Jennifer Palmer, "Identity Crises: Why the Air Force is Changing Its Image and Maybe Its Name," *Air Force Times*, 24 January 2000, 12-14.

[6] Gordon W. Kieser, The U.S. Marine Corps and Defense Unification 1944-47, (Baltimore, MD: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing, 1996), 56.

[7] David H. Hackworth, Colonel, U.S. Army, Ret., *Rare Breed of Generals*, 23 March 1999. Available online at http://www.hackworth.com.

at times, counter-cultural, the Corps implores this approach to the benefit of recruitment. Unwaveringly standing for something holds market appeal. In light of the critics, this nation is generally endeared to the Corps' sacrifices, and its approach to service. The key is the recruitable market must continue to receive this message beyond the voice of its critics and beyond the mass media malaise diluting the Corps' public presence.

Finally, **the tradition to remain a relevant warfighting institution has been a timeless journey for the Corps**. It ties the recruiting scope and purpose to the heart of the Corps' existence – winning battles. The *1997 Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review* confirms how the Corps intends to maintain relevancy in the new age. The *Review* stated, "The focus of the Marine Corps RMA [revolution in military affairs] effort is on the individual Marine and his or her ability to win in combat."[8] Major R. D. Coleman, a recent Marine Corps Command and Staff College graduate, offered a 1999 thesis outlining the recruitment responsibilities in order to support this RMA vision. Major Coleman examined the "strategic corporal" concept, speaking specifically at its foundation to the RMA.   The initial premise to Major Coleman's argument begins with the National Security Agency's analysis of what factors were revolutionizing warfare. All factors centered on the Internet's basic characteristics – digital networks through wireless and fiber conduits.

But Major Coleman's thesis does not go as far to suggest that the information revolution is already at hand with the population of Americans the Corps will recruit from in the near future. In my estimation it is. Use of the Internet by the youth of the

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[8] The Honorable William S. Cohen, Secretary of Defense and John M. Shalikashvili, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review,* an Office of the Secretary of Defense and Joint Chiefs of Staff collaboration, May 1997, 13.

United States is growing exponentially along with the growth of Internet capability.[9]   In

fact, the "**two** fastest-growing segments of the Net population [are] kids and teens."[10]

The journey towards the RMA cannot take root by simply opting into Internet-

based infrastructure. It begins by recruiting from a population of young adults who are

rapidly internalizing themselves in the Internet.[11] They are the future Marines, the

"strategic corporals." These potential recruits possess an almost unconscious ability to

multitask themselves using the tools of the new world. They are also generally expected

to exceed the Information Age learning curve and adaptability demonstrated by the

current generation of Marines. These skills must be harnessed and added to the

intangible "body armor" that comes with the title *Marine*. A return to the Corps' post-

Vietnam war recruiting lessons provides an important and discerning stage toward

building a relevant Corps out of the new set of circumstances.

Moving out of Vietnam War conscription, the Corps took considerable time to

develop a winning recruiting strategy. In the transition from the Vietnam experience, the

Corps began to crumble from within. The Corps' leadership knew it.   Throughout the

1970's, military pay and benefits were improving appreciably, while anti-military

sentiment, drug use, desertions, and malcontented individuals plagued the Corps' rank

and file.[12] The crises, in due course, became the impetus for change. The call to action

evolved a method of recruitment inclusive of business practices such as management,

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[9] "Profile of the US Users," *Headcount.com*, available online at
http://www.headcount.com/globalsource/profile/index.htm?choice=the_us&id=and Maryann Jones .
Thompson, "Market Perspective: Kids Online," *The Industry Standard* 9 August 1998, available online at
http://www.thestandard.com/research/metrics/display/0,2799,9994,00.html .

[10] Maryann Jones Thompson, "Tracking the Internet Economy: 100 Numbers You Need to Know," *The
Industry Standard,* 13 September1999, available online at
http://www.thestandard.com/research/metrics/display/0,2799,9801,00.html .

[11]"Internalizing" speaks to the fact the recruitable population is beginning to make the Internet their media
medium of choice. This idea is expanded upon over the course of the thesis.

[12] Coleman 9-12.

salesmanship, and a focus of manpower talent into recruiting. These actions forced a movement away from an already lean manpower posture in the operational Marine forces. Instituting these "non-standard" business methods, the Corps was well on its way to appropriate course corrections by the end of the 1980's. Clearly, new methods, laying outside the standard way the Corps normally operated, were being attempted. Besides this transformation, the Corps' leadership also dismissed several institutional myths.

Essentially overcoming four myths prompted critical lessons learned. First, **not everyone wants to be or can become a Marine**;[13] therefore, the Corps must selectively recruit its force. There is no volunteering mass market waiting anxiously to become Marines; there is just a recruitable population. Second, relying heavily on advertising the Corps' legendary image is not enough; **the Corps' recruiting center of gravity is the individual Marine recruiter and, as such, must be the focus of effort**. As such, Recruiters must be provided appropriate resources and leadership. Third, the Corps' method of recruitment need not stray from its institutional nature, but the **adoption of irregular methods, such as management, salesmanship, and marketing practices, must compliment the Corps' recruiting successes**.

There are times when an institution must take chances and inculcate methods born outside established tradition. A Marine Corps recruiting district commanding officer, in the late 1970's, under pressure of being fired for mission failure, faced down the chiding from the critics, thought outside the box, and developed the business-based platform of "Systematic Recruiting."   Upon implementing these new systematic business methods, his recruiting district's performance got worse before it got better.[14] A lag in

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[13] Ibid 11.
[14] A. P. McMillan, Brigadier General, USMC, Ret., *Systematic Recruiting,* speech presented to RMC students, San Diego, CA, circa 1978-79, 1-5.

performance is typically observed when institutions initially implement irregular methods to overcome disruptive periods. He persevered and modeled a winning solution.

Behind the scenes of taking institutional chances to implement change usually lie the personal strains and risks which accompany leading change. Mothering change into an organization carries with it the mental stretch marks for others to critique or emulate. This thesis understands a different environment for change exists. **The Corps is not under unusual pressure to execute change. It is the military recruiting incumbent. The effort behind this thesis stems from the need to anticipate the changes the Internet will cast on the recruitable market in order to prevent any disruptions to Marine Corps recruiting.**

Fourth, **raising enlistment standards does not detract from the recruiting effort**.[15] Instead, while increasing standards challenges the recruiting force, "raising the bar" eventually enables growth toward a more relevant force whose success self-perpetuates the Corps' image and recruiting cycle.

In effect, Marine Recruiters are not recruiting in their own image; they must look for even greater potential. The constant improvement in recruitment quality maintains a more relevant Corps and a more marketable Corps. However, the recruiting force must be well armed and firmly guided in order to prosecute an effective recruiting campaign to successfully recruit from the Information Age market. There is also another consideration. The perception or reality of a revolution in military affairs (RMA), accepted by the Marine Corps as "enhancing" the individual Marine,[16] further implies the Corps intends to adjust its recruiting expectations regarding the public at large.

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[15] Coleman 24.

[16] The Honorable William S. Cohen, Secretary of Defense and General John M. Shalikashvili, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff 43.

Juxtaposing the Corps' trend in recruitment quality improvement with the manpower concerns underlying the antecedent of the RMA – information dominance –[17] naturally asserts that the qualities of the Information Age recruitable market are prepared to support the future manpower needs of the Marine Corps. The key is attracting the overall quality in the recruitable market.

The Information Age now presents some new dynamics. Independent research funded by the Department of Defense studies established today's recruitable population's propensity to enlist for military service is narrowing dramatically.[18] In addition to waning enlistment interest, there are internal manpower concerns. The Corps officially established a negative retention trend in an *All Marine (ALMAR)* message published in mid-February of this year. The failure to retain Marines will require other Marines to carry "a larger pack" of responsibility. Essentially, the MCRC can expect to see its mission expand.[19]

A recent *Government Accounting Office Report on Retention* established the Corps had the lowest percentage of service members dissatisfied or intending to depart at the end of their enlistment. Marines are not leaving because they are disenchanted with service.[20] One may estimate Marines are going the way of the Information Age market – a market presenting other growth experiences and a plethora of opportunity.[21]

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[17] The central premise of the U.S. Joint military strategy, *Joint Vision 2010,* and of the broader Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) is that military success in the future will depend on the ability of U.S. forces to achieve and exploit information superiority over any adversary, as well as to effectively employ other new technologies to accomplish assigned tasks across the spectrum of potential military operations. Secretary of Defense, Annual Report to Congress, 1999, available online at
http://www.dtic.mil/execsec/adr1999/chap12.html .

[18] Michael J. Wilson, Project Director, Westat Inc., *Youth Attitude tracking Study: Propensity and Advertising Report, study*, DASW01-96-C-0041, 11 June 1998.

[19] CMC Washington, DC message to All Marines (ALMAR 11), subject: "Retention." 141223Z Mar 2000.

[20] "GOA Report on Retention," *Headquarters Marine Corps War Room Report 7-99,* 5 October 1999.

[21] "Easily trained, skilled, and goal oriented," is the theme amongst job "head-hunters" over discharged military personnel. A trounce into any search engine on the Net will establish the value of military personnel. Specifically, *Microsoft* launched *Microsoft* Skills 2000 IT Career Initiative to train 40,000 departing service members annually in *Microsoft* information technology. The intangibles married with the

Besides the growth economy, there is a decreasing pool of people with military experience in positions to encourage young adults to consider military service. Rudy Deleon, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, recently reported to Congress that the "country's pool of mentors" with military experience is shrinking. These mentors were "key influencers" in getting young adults to consider the military through the recombinant effect of sharing their military experience.[22]

All military services recognize the instability, caused by the lowering propensity to enlist. The services are also recognizing a general decreasing return on their investments into recruiting.

- Although the Army spent more than $11,000 for every soldier it recruited this year, it missed its goal by 6,300.

- While the Air Force raised recruitment spending 28 percent this year -- shelling out $5,403 per airman -- it fell short of its goal by 1,700.

- The Navy reached its goal for the year only after spending 38 percent more in 1999 than in 1995 -- a total of $8,835 per recruit.

- The Marine Corps spent the least [overall but] per recruit -- $6,006 each.

- Private corporations spend an average of $8,628 to recruit each new employee, according to the *Saratoga Institute*. In the service industry the cost is $7,212. While the figures for private industry have remained relatively stable over the past five years, **the military's recruitment costs have been escalating swiftly and are expected to go up again next year**.[23]

While the nation is at its lowest unemployment in three decades, averaging 4.2 percent in 1999,[24] the private sector is stable but the military services are in a downward spiral. The Department of Defense is responding by improving pay and benefits and

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skills of the Information Age work a two way street, sucking talent away from the rank and file in order to feed the new economy. Donna Fenn, "Recruiting: Targeting the Military," *Inc*, 1 June 1996, available online at http://www.inc.com ; Barb Cole- Gomolski, "*Microsoft* Launches IT Recruiting Program," *Computerworld*, 8 January 1999, available online at http://www.computerworld.com/home/print.nsf/all/9902088F26 .

[22] Ashley B. Washington, "Military Struggles to Find Recruits," *UPI*, 17 March 2000, available online at http://www.military.com/News/…/0,10451,38d2b0a8-158b-49,00.htm .

exploring other options. In fact, the Secretary of Defense visited Beverly Hills, this

February, in order to engage movie stars to help support military recruitment. The

following editorial piece comments on the Honorable Mr. Cohen's trip and suggests

current recruiting concerns go well beyond the economic challenges.

> The old republican notion that citizenship entails a personal obligation to contribute to the nation's defense got left conveniently behind on the near side of President Clinton's bridge to the 21st century.
>
> Acutely sensitive to the slightest shift in fashion, American youngsters know the score. They know that even if Cohen succeeds in cajoling Harrison Ford or Will Smith (two other stars that he buttonholed) into promoting the Marine Corps, their own kids won't be trooping off to boot camp anytime soon. Nor are they buying the line that multiethnic democracy is abloom in Bosnia or that Kosovo was an epic victory. However wacked out on pop culture they may appear to be the military's record of performance since Desert Storm has been less heroic than faintly embarrassing.
>
> Back on the block, young Americans wait for someone to explain why, a decade after the end of the Cold War, service to country remains worthy and important. That case can be made. But making it is not Julia Roberts' job. It remains Cohen's--and his boss's.[25]

The military services cannot count on money, pay and benefits, advertising

with movie stars, or recent applications of military power to significantly shift the new

Information Age generation toward considering enlistment. No pop culture presence in a

mass advertising malaise is going to substantially drag youth attitudes toward the

military. Shifting out of the by-standing, "couch potato" television era, the recruitable

population prefers the Internet's ability to navigate the wide-open spaces of ideas and

possibilities. The compressed and condensed medium of television devalues choice and

does not sell the message of commitment and service to country to the Information Age

generation. The military needs to focus on the correct medium, the Internet, to sell itself

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[23] Andrea Stone, "Military Recruiting Costs Soar," and "Paying High Price for Preparedness," both in *USA Today, 22* October 1999, available online at http://www.ncpa.org .
[24] Cable News Network, 7 January 2000.
[25] Andrew J. Bacevich, "Julia Roberts Wants You!," *Washington Post*, 28 February 2000, A15.

because as Marshall McCluhan put it in *Understanding Media, The Extensions of Man*, "**the medium is the message**."

Interestingly enough, the Corps feels it can compete in the current growth economy the Information Age is providing. Besides the downward trend in youth attitudes toward enlistment, economic pressures, and the decreasing presence of former military men and women around the recruitable public, the *Marine Corps Recruiting Command's Fiscal Year 2000 Recruitment Advertising Plan (RAP)* recognizes, "The Corps' primary competition has emerged not from one of the other services, but from the growing economic stability and choices offered in the civilian world. Increased college enrollment, greater employment opportunities, and perceived benefits available in civilian jobs affect market propensity toward military service."[26] **The Corps recognizes it must go beyond the realm of inter-service competition to make its Marines – the Corps competes with the civilian sector to fill its ranks with quality personnel**

As Marine Corps' recruiting competes with the civilian sector both in recruiting and retention, the challenges to capture the attention of the new generation of the recruitable population grows. Younger Americans are steadily "internalizing" themselves in the Internet. A 1999 study conducted by the *Roper Starch* research firm revealed children and teens, ages 9 to 17, preferred the Internet to the television and telephone, with 15- to 17-year-olds going on-line an average of five times a week. *Forrester Research* reports the "net powered" Generation Y (under 22 years old) is different from other generations who use the Internet. Generation Y will research their

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[26] Marine Corps Recruiting Command and J. Walter Thompson Pamphlet, *Marketing the Corps: Fiscal Year 2000 Recruitment Advertising Plan* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Recruiting Command, 21 September 1999), 3.

life choices more carefully.[27] They expect thorough and accurate information to develop

these choices and are likely to establish the bona fides of any information by examining

multiple sources, especially through the Internet.   Speaking to students at the Marine

Corps Command and Staff College, Quantico, Virginia, a Marine Corps Lieutenant

Colonel in a public affairs lecture commented, "There is a whole culture out there that

does not believe it unless it is on a website."[28]

The Corps is beginning to consider these facts and trends relating to the in-coming

recruitable generation, Generation Y. Apparently, Generation Y displays values more

compatible to military service then the out-going generation, Generation X. While the

"high-tech nomads" of Generation X had values less suited to the Corps' core values,[29]

there is great expectation the follow on generation's values will be more favorable for

military service.[30] This branding of the recruitable generations and their characteristics

are major elements of the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory's (MCWL) efforts to

define future military strategy. The MCWL is combining the research of generational

experts, the *Washington Post,* and the U.S. Army Recruiting Command in order to

wargame future strategy. The research suggests the "Millennial Generation" or "N-Gen

[Network Generation]," essentially Generation Y and beyond, has much to offer in

military service.[31] However, the MCWL recognizes the in-coming generation may not

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[27] "America Online: Children Prefer the Net to TV," and "Forrester Research: Young Consumers Have Internalised the Net," *Nua Internet Surveys, 12* November 1999, available online at http://www.nua.ie . Also see supporting research at "Profile of the US Users," *Headcount.com, a*vailable at http://www.headcount.com; Georgia Tech Internet Survey website, available online at http://www.cc.gatech.edu/gvu/user_surveys/ .

[28] Scott R. Campbell, Lieutenant Colonel, USMC, "Media Operations on the Battlefield – A Look at Past, Present, and Future," lecture presented at the U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Quantico, VA, 10 April 2000.

[29] The Marine Corps' core values are honor, courage, and commitment. FMFM 1-0, *Leading Marines*, (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Marine Corps, 1995), 101-102.

[30] Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory Pamphlet, *Strategic Surprise Seminar*, (Quantico, Va: GAMA Corporation, Falls Church, VA, 14 July 1999), 4-5.

[31] Ibid.

identify with the military, mainly due to the fact they are not aware they share values

with the military.

> [Their contribution] to group and society may not extend automatically to traditional institutions of military service. Local institutions rather than federal institutions may be the preferred means of fulfilling this group identification and need to serve. There are indications that this generation associates such traditional military values as teamwork and leadership training with *Xerox* and *Microsoft*. Likewise, volunteerism is likely to focus on local charities or environmental preservation as it is to military service absent a perceived threat to the nation.[32]

The in-coming generation shows much promise. Key will be ensuring the Corps creates

the recruiting methods that speak to this generation's appeal and energizes it to consider

military service.

Institutions that do not establish Net presence to accompany the "Net Generation's"

Net preferences will potentially lose this market. Institutions must develop a symbiotic

and trusting relationship between their markets and other partnered institutions through a

shared presence that is always connected online. **The person-to-person service and

sales force must be the central source of this Net presence.** Trust is initiated and

maintained when the Marine Recruiter establishes credible personal, community, and

institutional presence in the Marine Recruiter's locale **and** online through anytime or

real-time interaction with in-coming recruitable generations; today, trust is marginalized

without both.

Besides trust, speed and anonymity are valued commodities of the Information Age

generations.[33] Soon the speed of information transfer will turn real-time and anytime

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[32]Ibid.

[33] Late in the author's research, these generational facets of trust, speed, and anonymity, were further supported after reviewing the U.S. Army Recruiting Command's research on the "N-Gen" or Network Generation. The research also supports the trends indicating the in-coming generation shares many values associated with military service. *The Net Generation – Understanding N-Geners*, a U.S. Army Recruiting Command brief dated 22 February 1999; *1998 New Recruit Values survey: Measuring the Values of Recent Inductees*, brief by Lieutenant Colonel David H. Ohle, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, U.S. Army, 7 June 1999.

interaction into an "always on" Internet environment, building a generation with rapidly maturing online expectations. With Internet speed comes the enhanced ability to examine the breadth of information and make choices. An Internet site like *Priceline.com* allows consumers to choose the price of goods and services through fast interactive service. *Priceline.com* exemplifies the growing expectations of the Internet Age. Generation Y expects to have personal choices and expects something in return for sharing personal information over anonymity. Personal choice is an expectation the Information Age culture demands, and anonymity is an Internet end-user's valued commodity throughout. **Essentially, the segment of the population at and growing into the recruitable age zone is developing life preferences that parallel their Internet preferences and associate expectations through the unconscious application of Internet technologies**.

Marine Recruiters need the resources and leadership to operate at all levels in order to be present with the "internalized" Internet-based market. As in the past, the Marine Corps needs private business to help "show them the way." In the *1997 Report of the Quadrennial Review,* the military services recognized business was undergoing revolutionary changes, mainly due to information technologies. The *Report* recommended the military services reengineer their support structures in order to take advantage of these changes.[34] This revolution in business affairs (RBA) presents new challenges to management, salesmanship, and marketing. Marines, due to their warfighting philosophy, are in some ways more prepared[35] than others, but in other ways,

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[34] The Honorable William S. Cohen, Secretary of Defense and John M. Shalikashvili, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, v.

[35] In fact, an associate editor of *Inc. Magazine,* which focuses a large readership on better business practices, had this to say about the Corps' capstone publication. Marine Corps publication *FMFM 1 Warfighting* "happens to be one of the most relevant and timely books about leadership, management, and organizations for business people that I've read in a long time. For it turns out that the conditions under which modern warfare is conducted bear an uncanny resemblance to the state of the marketplace." George

they remain unarmed to transition their support practices and infrastructure to meet the new paradigms. In fact, an August, 1999, *Marine Corps Gazette* article titled, "Information Technology: Advice from Silicon Valley CEOs," lays out recommendations the Marine Corps may use to support their Information Age transitions. Some of these recommendations will be inculcated in this thesis.

Earlier adaptations of business practices have greatly assisted Marine Corps recruiting. The military services are riding in the wake of an RBA that is creating a new recruitable generation. Unlike Marine Corps recruiting's slow adaptation out of the Vietnam War period, the Corps must not be satisfied with making meager sustainable adjustments in reaction to the information revolution. From the previous points, the Corps must concern itself with the new generation internalizing itself in the Internet, because failure to adapt to it may pose disruptive threats to Marine recruiting. The institutional attitudes hung up on a "best recruiting service" tangent may impede adoption of new methods and disregard external and internal trends supporting greater concern and action. An examination of the nature of the Internet and how the MCRC has recently attempted to leverage the Internet will show there is much more to consider in the brand new world of the Information Age. In fact, the Corps may have something to add to the RBA.

Gendron, "Onward Through the Fog," Inc. Magazine, 1 February 1995, available online at
http://www.inc.com .

CHAPTER 2

LEARNING TO LEVERAGE THE NET … NATURALLY

Calibrating a military recruiting system for the Information Age requires an understanding of the nature of the Internet. The Internet is essentially information and media converged with information technologies and telecommunications. This chapter begins by defining how the Internet grows out of our need to extend our presence and how this need shapes the Internet, which in turn, shapes us. It also explains how Marine Recruiter salesmanship can utilize this extended presence. The chapter then concludes by reviewing Marine Corps Recruiting Command's (MCRC) Internet presence.

The organizing principle behind Information Age technology and the Internet is people want to extend themselves as individuals, communities, and institutions beyond what their physical presence provides. Americans want to communicate and gather information in an ever-growing spiral of efficiency. We cannot be omnipresent; however, various media tools can help us do our bidding with many others on-line, or even do our bidding for us. The Internet's ability to converge various media powerfully shapes us in many ways and often to our surprise. Marshall McCluhan, the father of media theory stated, "**we shape our tools (media) and afterward our tools shape us.**"[36] Consider in 1996, information technology, representing only 3% of our economic basis, proceeded over the next two years to contribute an average of 27% of our gross domestic product each year.[37] Bill Gates suggests we can expect more shaping from our information technology tools.

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[36] Considered the bible at the MIT Media Lab, the reprinting of McCluhan's 1965 work "has made of its author the foremost oracle of the age." In the business of media, "the book has acquired the standing of Holy Scripture." Marshall McCluhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man,* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1965 reprinted in 1995), ix - xxi.

[37] Michael J. Mandel, "Increasing Returns and the New World of Business," *Business Week,* 31 March 1997, 58-68.

> [A]s the 21st Century approaches, sophisticated digital [media] technologies and the promise of exploding bandwidth are combining to create a third kind of convergence – one that will change our lives more dramatically than anything we've seen so far. It will deliver the power of the Information Age into the hands of everyone, anytime, anyplace.[38]

Military recruitment depends very much on selling its image to the masses through the use of various media. A time-tested partnership with media giant *J. Walter Thompson* serves as the dominant strategic platform for selling the Marine Corps' image. *J. Walter Thompson's* high impact and metaphor-laced advertising campaigns have shaped the Marine Corps' brand for over four decades. However, the Marine Corps' "branding" needs to transition away from a platform focused on public awareness. Instead, the Marine Corps must transition to ensure its brand's national Internet presence is equally as strong. The national military recruiting focus must move from public *awareness* to public *interaction* in order to prepare for the indomitable Mr. Gates' revelation – the masses will soon have presence everywhere on the Internet.

To begin to define Internet presence, it is important to establish fundamental approaches. While real people build the Internet conduit, they obviously cannot operate physically inside it. Instead, individuals operate as end-users. A salesman pitching a product or a customer asking a question cannot physically be present in cyberspace. However, through the Internet and smart information technology tools, people can transmit the content of their message and even put the content into context through the proper mix of Internet presence.

Internet presence is discarnate, or virtual, instead of incarnate. While incarnate connotes human physical presence at a specific time and place, for the purpose of this thesis "discarnate" presence means human not physically present but present in real-time. A good example is the communication between two people conducting a telephone

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[38] Bill Gates, "Everyone, Anytime, Anywhere," *Forbes ASAP*, October 4, 1999, 45.

conversation. Their physical bodies are not present but they communicate in real-time and humanistic fashion. Marine Recruiters in the trenches often use unappealing and intrusive discarnate presence during telephone canvassing. Described as the "cold call," because the Recruiter is often calling someone he has never met, Marine Recruiters make hundreds of grating cold calls a month in order to "beat the bushes" toward mission accomplishment. The Internet provides a means to "warm up" the cold call by allowing hybrid discarnate and virtual presence approaches. "Virtual" means, "our physical bodies play no role."[39] Virtual presence allows us to communicate anytime using combinations of text, acoustics, and graphics. Sometimes this includes links to other virtual individual, community, and institutional sites called hyperlinks. While our physical presence is absent, websites, games (like *Marine DOOM*), and web "streamed" audio and graphics extend our messages, ideas, and images in cyberspace. Much of it is very new technology.

In order to efficiently extend Recruiter presence toward the in-coming Net generation, MCRC must take some non-traditional action. This thesis will explain an optimum consideration – establishing hybrid Internet presence in conjunction with a multitasked media environment where a Recruiter can adjust the mix of presence to fit the situation and gain sales advantage. The current recruiting system does not even fund pagers for every Recruiter let alone cellular phones to build telecommunication dominance in order to improve the efficiency of a Marine Recruiter's discarnate presence. Every Recruiter needs an Internet and telecommunications presence through digital cellular Internet appliances that will enable an "always on" presence.

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[39] Paul Levinson, *Digital McCluhan*, (New York: Routledge, 1999), 6.

The benefit from hybrid incarnate, discarnate, and virtual presence is exemplified in Marine Corps firearms training. At a training facility, a threatening virtual image appears and the Marine incarnate engages the image by firing a well-aimed shot to the chest. The virtual image reacts instantaneously and falls down. The discarnate controller, in another place, wants to teach the Marine to ensure all targets are destroyed. The controller overrides the virtual image's logic set. The virtual image reappears and the Marine is forced to reengage the virtual image. The lessons take moral, mental, and physical form. The combination of real, discarnate, and virtual hybrid presence creates the moral atmosphere of the dirty but dutiful instinct to kill or be killed, teaches the mental agility to maintain situational awareness, and instructs the physical follow through that must become second nature to Marine marksmen. **If intangibles can be taught and experienced through hybrid presence, why cannot these intangibles be sold through hybrid presence?**

Today's military currently uses online modeling and simulation wargaming to impart the same effect. Despite past initial resistance and institutional skepticism, Marines are manning the simulation computers today. The point here is the Marine Corps, though weary of technology based answers, understands there is much to be gained in extending presence electronically. **The Marine Corps' skepticism toward extending Recruiter presence electronically centers on a misunderstanding between how the valued commodities of the Information Age can add value, initiate, and even develop a sales-based relationship.**

As has already been discussed, there are two highly valued commodities the world's Internet presence shares -- speed and anonymity. Both can be perceived as counter-productive to the Corps' recruiting sales process. After all, Marine Recruiters are

taught to maintain contact with a prospect for a decent amount of time and, as the meeting comes to an end, close with the prospect relinquishing, at least, a name and contact information. However, Internet speed and anonymity lead to greater action and interaction. These commodities, **Internet speed and anonymity, initially seem counter-intuitive to building online community; however, the reverse is true. Internet speed and anonymity are the antecedents to relationship building on the Internet**. It is no small wonder there should be reservations behind transitioning a sales force, like military recruiting, into an online community. Older generations of Marines may view this with antipathy, but in my estimation, it will become the natural expectation of the younger Marines on recruiting duty. That "speed" and "anonymity" builds relationship is a paradigm shift most often misunderstood because it all sounds counter-intuitive. Yet making the shift must become the facet most pursued in establishing interactive and action-based presence with Generation Y and beyond.

It would be questionable for the Marine Corps to establish presence with the online generation exclusive of the Recruiter and a matrix of Internet media tools for the Recruiter to utilize. The anonymous prospect must be catered to with a hybrid of speedy capability. The gamut of which includes email, cellular email, hyperlinks that make email responses more credible, website interaction, etc…. No Marine Corps online centralized "home office" only approach will be able to provide suitable relationship or trust building responses to prospects. However, a decentralized Marine Recruiters' web of Internet presence will be able to gain and maintain presence with the recruitable public online. Also, Recruiters must be able to institute varying levels of increased personal dialogue by improving contact from an email (virtual presence), to an online chat session (discarnate presence), eventually leading to a personal meeting (incarnate presence).

Digitized "infomercials," "webcasted" radio, and "streamed" media must be available to the Recruiters to include in their dialogue. This effort exhibits the hybridized and multitasked media environment, which displays institutional relevance to the new Age prospects for military service.

Local situational awareness will still be demanded throughout most Marine Recruiter-to-prospect dialogues. **Subtle, rapidly changing, and geographically diverse recruitable generation expectations cannot be managed by a centralized online presence**. The individual recruiters must be able to manage prospect variances in expectation amongst the wide breadth of niche and growth market models. The penchant for change within Information Age markets suggests recruitable markets' nuances will develop, multiply, and disintegrate rapidly. A decentralized, national Web of Marine Recruiters are best capable to maintain top-sight, over the online recruitable population, as it becomes increasingly a moving target.

Besides maintaining contact with the new generation online, it will be important to elevate online interaction between the Recruiter and the recruitable public in order to sell intangibles. In the combinations of Internet presence and multitasked media, content not only becomes context, context not only builds into knowledge, but experience can be ultimately extended to someone else. This interplay of media presence and multitasked media begins to chip away at the MCRC's position: Internet presence cannot recruit and intangibles cannot be sold through anything but the Marine Recruiter incarnate. Yet, "cold call" canvassing remains the necessary evil to get the public to spare a moment of their time for a recruiter they do not know. The Marine Corps can develop a better recruiting continuum from prospect awareness through prospect interview. It can do so

by developing the new interaction mediums available through the Internet. Within these mediums lie new ways to understand the recruitable public.

Internet tools are measuring our discarnate moves as we surf the web. And these measurements are providing the discarnate and virtual sales processes with the edge. Instead of a sales dialogue starting cold, it could begin with some understanding about the prospect. In fact, our discarnate and virtual selves are shaped both knowingly and unknowingly, but most importantly, in our own image while online.

> Web companies are compiling (and selling access to) huge databases that hold the subtlest nuances of users' online behavior and interests, applying sophisticated analysis programs, profiling techniques and "collaborative filtering." The advances will let sites not just target which ads pop up on your screen, but also alter their content on the fly to present customized images tailored to each individual. The Internet will look less like a digital commons and more like a hall of mirrors, showing you reflections of yourself everywhere you look.[40]

The process of researching this thesis produced a very pleasing relationship between this discarnate researcher and the virtual salesman at the *Amazon.com* web site. A hybrid discarnate to virtual dialogue with the site's search engine produced a list of superb sources. Eventually, the relationship became a valued one. I provided my virtual identification via an anonymous styled email address and the site's virtual salesman responded by emailing me further sources (**anonymity valued**). I established virtual presence at *Amazon.com*. The site valued my virtual presence and began to profile it with the latest database bits of information. When I returned to the sight repeatedly, the site's virtual salesman began to react automatically to my needs, extending the source possibilities well beyond the scope I had imagined. The site prompted me with numerous possibilities; often the sources had several critiques of the source in order for me to not only put matters into context, but also the conglomerate provided me understanding.

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[40] Josh McHugh, "Hall of Mirrors," *Forbes*, 7 February 2000, 120.

Most of the sources were suitable for my thesis work. Eventually I delivered my real identity and credit card number to receive numerous sources. *Amazon.com*, partnered with a speedy postal carrier that utilized a dispersed distribution network, provided me the sources within days**. A trusting relationship developed.** *Amazon.com* improved the value of the relationship by granting me one "click" purchasing. **Speed was valued**, and so, the dialogue continues. In return, I received quicker action and obtained greater interaction exemplifying the new value sets for the on-line population. The more interactive the brand the greater its value and the greater chance the discarnate end-user will deliver an email address, phone number, and eventually a full identity in order to elevate the sales process and build a trusting dialogue. **The take away lesson – the Internet can conduit virtual sales relationships by adding value to the point where customers relinquish their anonymity**.

The MCRC's current use of Internet presence creates an interesting dichotomy. The command is willing to value Internet presence for internal growth but is uncomfortable with creating an Internet presence of high value with the growing network-centric recruitable population. This dichotomy is typified by MCRC's use of distance learning. Distance learning is taking off in many places, especially the military. But can distance learning teach soft skills like negotiation and sales?

Researchers at Columbia University believe "the Web is just not good for teaching some things…[for instance] soft skills such as sales are not well addressed by Web-based instruction. Today's Web pages are good at presenting information, but they do not provide an effective forum in which to practice [some] skills."[41]

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[41] Benjamin Bell, "How On-Line Courses are Developed," *EdTech,* 23 January 1999, available online at http://www.tc.Columbia.edu/~academic/edtech .

With this research on the table, it is surprising MCRC intends to use distance learning, via the Internet, for Recruiter sales sustainment training. This includes adopting Internet based discarnate instructor (video teleconferencing and real-time interaction), and virtual instructor (anytime interaction and possibly gaming media) methods.[42] It is important to note, MCRC intends to augment the current Marine Recruiter training, not replace it. Similarly, the constructs of this thesis intend to reinforce Marine Corps recruiting nature and practices, not replace them. Clearly recruiting, even more so than sales, is a soft skill requiring significant in-person interaction to teach and sustain. But can Marine Recruiters, who take sales to the level of high art, learn something through the Internet? If so, why should not prospects have something to learn by interacting with a Marine Corps recruiting Internet presence, which would provide more than just content but also context, knowledge, and experience? **Here we see the typical strides of an institution in the innovator's dilemma**. **The Marine Corps Recruiting Command believes soft skills, such as sales skills, can be taught discarnately or virtually via the Internet**. **But, it disagrees in principle the Internet can help recruit using the same methods.   Both are possible.**

The *FY 00 Marine Corps Recruiting Command, Recruitment Advertising Plan* definitively states the current Marine Corps' position on how Internet presence will support recruiting, obviously without understanding their website, *marineofficer.com,* by definition*,* virtually recruits.

> No effort will be made to recruit prospects on the Web site [(there are two marines.com and marineofficer.com)] and there will be no deviation from the established process of face-to-face recruiting. There will be no virtual recruiting,

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[42] Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff, Training, Marine Corps Recruiting Command letter to Commanding General, Marine Corps Recruiting Command, 1507 T/lps. Subject: "Strategic Concept for Implementation of Distance Learning Technology and Procedures for Training for Marine Corps Recruiting Command," 29 March 1999.

> nor will there be any requirements for additional recruiter effort (e.g., chat room moderation, on-line Q&A sessions, etc.).[43]

While *marines.com* follows this construct, *marineofficer.com* does not. By definition, *marineofficer.com* actively recruits through virtual efforts. At one time, visitors to the website could interact with the brand by examining content put into context. *Marineofficer.com* provided Officer Selection Officers (OSO)[44] telephone numbers, allowed direct email to OSO's, and site navigation through many site links to gain understanding of the officer program. Besides this, cooperating institutions hyperlinked to the site, establishing added credibility. There were also numerous hyperlinks to separate OSO pages. The *marineofficer.com* site allowed virtual dialog by allowing prospects to email over 50 percent of the OSO's who opted into the service. However, metric-centric[45] *J. Walter Thompson* modified *marineofficer.com* into a hierarchal lead generation site with no prospect for anonymous recruiter email and degraded the former site's information and community ergonomics, which focused on improving information credibility to overcome the "prove it" mentality of the college market.

A review of an internal MCRC Advertising Branch memorandum, released in October of 1999, and a look at the current *marineofficer.com* website establishes that the Advertising Branch incorrectly pegged the *marineofficer.com* focus, although, it had initially observed what the OSO's wanted. MCRC then constructed a site ignoring the initial focus and its supporting observations.

> The original concept for the Marineofficer.com website was to primarily capture qualified leads and the secondary effort was to provide information and offer a means to contact the OSOs [**this should be reversed – the initial site focused on information and OSO contact**]. However, after AOP [Assistant for Officer

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[43] Marine Corps Recruiting Command and J. Walter Thompson Pamphlet 17.

[44] An "OSO" is a Marine Corps officer whose duty it is to recruit for officer procurement.

[45] This is not specifically a negative connotation. "Metric-centric" is the author's term for any networked system that values centralized information over decentralized operations. Metrics is the statistical analysis of information on the web.

> Procurement – the six national functionaries that run the Marine officer procurement effort] input, it became abundantly clear that the recruiting force needed the website to primarily drive prospects towards contacting the OSO directly, capturing lead information while doing so. The rational[e] for this is the fact that many qualified prospects are leery of using the phone or coming into an OSO's office directly [**a recognition of the value of anonymity!**]. This is compounded by the lack of knowledge of the existence of officer commissioning programs. Those who visit the website, either driven by a direct mail piece, campus media, or general awareness efforts, should be enticed to regard the website as a low pressure yet intriguing way to obtain information and/or contact the OSO directly. Simultaneously, the site can capture and track lead information. In the future, this data capture will allow analysis of web browsing habits to further hone our understanding of the prospect.[46]

Unfortunately, the current *marineofficer.com* website affords metric-centric methods over Recruiter-centric support. The only way to contact an OSO is for the prospect to "cough up" all identifying information. A visit to the website on April 7, 2000, demonstrated leaving only an email address to a Marine Recruiter was not an option. The site does not give the Marine Recruiter's 1-800 number for instant interaction. The site fails to respond to the Marine Recruiters' requirements or the values of the online generation. In this instance, MCRC's and *J. Walter Thompson*'s metric laden methods ensure a centralized, Internet "bean counter" approach, interrupting the Recruiter-to-prospect continuum – the preeminent operational requirement.

The combination of MCRC's acceptance of Internet based sales instruction and a centralized Net presence neither jives with its policy nor does it validate a coherent MCRC staffing of the facts or the needs of the Recruiters in the field. **It does spell out a concern – the Marine Corps will trust its center of gravity, the Marine Recruiter, to be trained in the art of sales by the Internet, but it questions the premise that it should trust its Marine Recruiters in a decentralized, distributed Internet system allowing real-time or anytime recruiting**. What may be a bona fide concern of Marine

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[46] Officer Advertising and Marketing, Marine Corps Recruiting Command letter to Officer Programs, Marine Corps Recruiting Command, M/1140. Subject: "Synopsis of marineofficer.com meeting officer

Recruiters and their leaders in the field, given the established MCRC penchant of metric-centricity, may be the feeling MCRC could easily micromanage Marine Recruiter Internet presence – the premise every move made in cyberspace can be watched. The same leadership restraint and assurance applied in metric heavy Systematic Recruiting must be applied to Internet recruiting. Leadership must not "choke" the Marine Recruiter's freedom of action online. Trust is critical to success. In the crux between Internet-based selling and teaching may lie an important lesson for the Marine Corps and other institutions, which are struggling to come to grips with the nature of their business and the nature of the Internet. **It is important for prospects to witness the Information Age value behind the trust we have in our Marine Recruiters – allowing Recruiters to act confidently and efficiently using a gamut of information tools and mediums**.

There are interesting issues developing from the inauguration of online military recruiting that begin to offer an important lesson. Within the many recruitable market niches amongst the tapestry of Internet media, the military services are beginning to build presence. The United States Navy is taking a very aggressive approach within the context of their RMA, labeled *Network-Centric Warfare*, as so are the other services. Unfortunately, the competitive atmosphere for information dominance has even risen to some very unprofessional if not inexcusable methods of "impersonation," or deception. This was brought to the attention of the Marine Corps' recruiting commanding generals and district commanding officers at a recruiting conference, in the spring of 1999. Briefed by a live Internet feed projected on a screen, the generals and district commanding officers were shown how U.S. Navy recruiting hyperlinks and advertising banners showed up when the words "Marine Corps" and other similar Marine Corps' domain names were inputted into some of the largest search engines on the Net. A recent

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programs/Advertising/JWT," 15 October 1999.   30

use of the word "marine" through the *Yahoo.com* search engine on March 11, 2000, resulted in the Navy banner popping up immediately. It seems the U.S. Navy appropriated the "Marine Corps" brand to intensify Internet presence. Also shown at the spring conference was a U. S. Air Force Reserve online Web banner that displayed the names "Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine" for a count of four seconds, then switched to establish a hyperlink with the U.S. Air Force Reserve website. Using the average decision time of "clicking" on a banner within three seconds, the U.S. Air Force Reserve leveraged their Internet presence off the backs of the other military services, playing on the current Internet population's habits.

In the nicest sense, the Corps' public presence competes with other Marines' and Marine grass root organizational presence. An Internet surfing session will bring up a plethora of active duty, reserve, and former Marine, grass root websites.[47] Although, most sell the Corps very well, the problem is they do not all lead to the Marine Recruiters – the center of gravity for the time-tested ways and means to recruit for our Corps. That some of the other services would value Internet presence over military professionalism did come as a surprise, but this and the plethora of grass roots presence makes a greater point – **if the Marine Corps, as an institution, does not utilize and dominate its brand through superior Internet presence, somebody else or some other organization will**.

It is important to understand the nature of discarnate and virtual presence, and the value it can provide recruiting along with personal Recruiter presence. Combined presence naturally creates an efficient and effective convergence of the Recruiter, recruitable public, and Internet media. Like the traditional power of metaphor-laced recruiting posters, Internet presence can become powerful extensions of the recruiting

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[47] "Grass roots" is the affectionate title given the formal and informal supportive national cadres of former Marines.

organization. In cyberspace we can do our bidding and even obtain cognitive growth and experience, especially if it naturally includes the inter-play of the Internet's multitasking environment.

In the next chapter, the focus shifts to describing how the Corps should go about building a Recruiter-centric, Internet recruiting infrastructure.   The recommendations supply a framework for change based upon moving out of the wake of the RBA and into the RBA itself. If our RMA is based on a revolutionary enhancement of the individual Marine, we should have the guts to do it – if we are to enhance the Marine, we must start by enhancing the Marine recruiter. A similar "call to arms" fixed the recruiting and manpower concerns coming out of the Vietnam War Era. At the beginning of the new century, reforms to Marine Corps recruiting must take place much quicker.

CHAPTER 3

SOME DESCRIPTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Marine Recruiters must become the central Internet presence of the Marine Corps' recruiting system. Their Internet presence must be able to go wherever the new generation goes online. Since the Information Age generation will expect to establish relationships inclusive of online presence, to develop Internet presence any other way could weaken or even eventually disestablish the Marine Recruiter as the Marine Corps Recruiting Command's (MCRC) center of gravity. Unfortunately, the Corps' limited Net posture is based on a philosophy that decouples these initial premises. Essentially, MCRC does not currently believe Marine Recruiters could or should work the Internet to establish discarnate or virtual presence. In reality, MCRC is building the virtual recruiting presence it claims it does not want. Moreover, this virtual presence lacks the bite of a hybrid, multitasked sales environment gained through combining more personal Recruiter incarnate, discarnate, and virtual presence, which maintains the Marine Recruiter as the focus of effort.

The Corps' current hierarchal Internet presence, distributing Recruiter leads and information from the top-down through centralized Net presence, may sustain a lead generation system but it will not force multiply closer ties between the Recruiter and a recruitable market. As has been established, the in-coming recruitable market is the largest growing market on the Internet. A more aggressive method would improve the Recruiter interaction with the market, specifically high school seniors, by combining a hybrid system of multitasked Marine Recruiter and institutional Internet presences with current recruiting efforts – always including the Recruiter's personal touch. Important to

this effort must be the means to measure its impact but ensuring it is divorced from the impediments of metric-centricity.

Measures of Effectiveness

There are four major measures of effectiveness for employing a decentralized recruiter focused internet presence: 1) the Recruiters interact to a greater degree with the recruitable population, 2) the Recruiters respect and trust supporting Internet methods, which center on "rebounding" or "slingshoting" prospects efficiently to them, 3) MCRC Internet use policy and infrastructure allow the Marine Recruiters to operate with a freedom of action to engage prospects within the multitasking Internet setting, and 4) the Internet methods ensure the Marine Recruiters remain the heart of customer service between the institution and the recruitable public. The first is measured through analysis that the Recruiter network cannot appropriately provide. This way, metric-centric "bean counting" does not infect the effort.[48] With the exception of the first, all these measures can be gauged through the leadership chain and Recruiter-based case studies.

Increasing the current ratio of Marine Recruiter to high school senior interaction is the critical measure of effectiveness for gauging the worth of injecting a decentralized Recruiter Internet presence into current local recruiting practices. While the Marine Corps Recruiter is the institutional center of gravity, the recruitable market center of gravity, in a pool oriented recruiting system, is the high school senior. **MCRC's current**

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[48] As previously explained, the Marine Colonel who first implemented Systematic Recruiting initially accepted a drop in performance before exhibiting the system's benefits. What could have happened had his efforts been subject to a statistic review during its turbulent beginnings? It is important to establish measures of effectiveness gauging general improvement over time. Online efforts to observe the recruiters directly while they inculcate the new methods will most likely build opposition to their adoption. The leadership chain, executing the changes, should be trusted to report on "intangible" measures of effectiveness." Other MCRC staff constructs should not impose metric-centricity creep into this system, unless they are seamless and impose no obstructing middleman between the prospect and Recruiter interaction.

efforts attain a nationwide recruiter to young men interaction ratio of 1 to 6.[49] An aggressive, focused Internet presence, given the current exponential growth of the Internet, in my expectations, should improve this recruiter to young men interaction ratio within the first decade of the 21st Century to 1 to 4. The key is establishing an improved matrix of recruiting presence and a commanding intent that cues into and interacts with high school seniors.

The current MCRC Internet lead generation system has no focus and is absent any information dominance emphasis, strategy, or coordinated staff maintenance. The fact other military services perpetuate themselves, using the Marine Corps' brand, and the fact the MCRC will not align Internet presence to meet Recruiter preferences are both strong indications of this. That MCRC, after being informed about the hijacking of the Marine brand by a military service, could not resolve the matter, at least within 6 months, is further cause for concern. Furthermore, because MCRC's Internet presence is centralized, MCRC's current Internet presence speaks to the plethora of online presence vice allowing Marine Recruiters to aim in on the various niches and growth markets within their local recruitable populations. *Marines.com* is a benign, virtual lead generation station, currently adverse to the recruitable population's most valued Internet commodities – speed and anonymity. While MCRC reported, "banner advertising on the Internet has not proven to be a cost-effective method of driving lead rates," they concurrently suggest "alternative tactics" have been developed.[50] But maybe this assessment needs to be reconsidered with regard to how banners are establishing presence. After all, it is clear MCRC allowed its banner effort to be eclipsed by other service banners, which used the Marine Corps brand.

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[49] James T. Kuhn, Lieutenant Colonel, USMC, Assistant Chief of Staff Plans and Policy, Marine Corps Recruiting Command, interviewed by the author, 29 March 2000.

Observing "source summary" information, from the AOP, 6th Marine Corps Recruiting District, established Internet banner advertising produced not only the largest number of leads but also the largest percentage of workable leads for officer procurement efforts in the District. This was at a time the *marineofficer.com* site, having been turned over from 1st Marine Corps District to MCRC control, was receiving very little MCRC staff emphasis and no operational upkeep at all, let alone national advertising support. In fact, in this instance, the combination of Internet and Internet Banner leads equaled almost 80% of all leads; the majority of these non-Internet lead generation sources were *J. Walter Thompson* supplied.[51]

The MCRC Internet presence should attain such a positive reputation with Marine Recruiters in the field that they anxiously push the recruitable population to the site knowing it will rebound them, through a multitude of Internet methods, back to the Recruiter – more trusting, informed, interested, and excited about the Marine Corps' relevant image.   Critical to this impression will be how MCRC ties its national efforts to the Recruiter. The answer is having a relevant national media presence the Marine Corps Recruiter can self-orient with and pull from in order to support dialogues with prospects. It would be critical to maintain information dominance over media habits of the recruitable population. But is this possible? MCRC recognizes the importance in foreseeing media habit changes and recognizes the recruitable public's multitasked media environment.

> No medium has yet to replace another. Instead consumers' attention has become more splintered as they "multi-task" between different media choices. Particularly among teens, it is not unusual to find a young person surfing the net,

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[50] Marine Corps Recruiting Command and *J. Walter Thompson* Pamphlet, 18.
[51] Rick Palermo, Major, USMC, AOP, 6th Marine Corps District, "Source Summary: Report to Officer Procurement, MCRC," 5 November 1999.

> watching TV, listening to the radio and talking on the phone to a friend about the latest issue of ESPN Magazine – all at the same time.[52]

This prompts two major questions: 1) If no medium is replaced, what can media be expected to do? 2) How can MCRC converge national advertising with the Recruiter in order to react to future media habits? Media theorist, Marshall McCluhan, would concur with MCRC's assessment that media is not replaced. But there is more sophistication to the issue. McCluhan points out that media spirals through a process of amplification, obsolescence, retrieval, and reversal. **Foreseeing these media spirals ('spiral' vice 'cycle' because of continuous improvement) is like trying to solve a conundrum.[53] Good organizations attempt to solve the riddle and, most importantly, organize to adapt to it.** MCRC needs to begin inculcating a new advertising paradigm drawing on fast, action oriented, interactive media, which can span the community of the recruitable population's centers of gravity and allows Marine Recruiters to harmonize their local recruitable population interaction with it.[54] This can be attained through organizing a national, multitasked, Recruiter-centric, hybrid recruiting presence that is incarnate, discarnate, and virtual. Of all the measures of effectiveness, Recruiter willingness to operate within this "new form" is critical.

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[52] Marine Corps Recruiting Command and *J. Walter Thompson* Pamphlet, 8.

[53] **Paul Levinson** is President and founder of Connected Education, an organization that has been offering graduate courses on the Internet for more than a decade. He is the author of *Mind at Large* (1988), *Electronic Chronicles* (1992), *Learning Cyberspace* (1995), *The Soft Edge* (1997) and *Digital McLuhan* (1999). *Digital McLuhan: A Guide to the Information Millennium* takes many of Marshall McLuhan's famous, provocative phrases and talks about their relevance in today's world. This biographical emphasis is available online at http://www.annonline.com/interviews/980407/biography.html. Levinson, 188.

[54] "While young consumers prefer to use sites using the latest graphics and animation technologies, such as Flash and MPEG video, the emphasis is on fast download times and easy navigation. Young adults spend an average of 10 hours online per week, 3 hours more than adults." "Forrester Research: Major Brands May Not Need Websites," *Nua.com*, 26 November 1999, available online at http://www.nua.net/surveys/index.cgi?f=VS&art_id=905355431&rel=true .

Maintain the Personal Touch

Though discarnate and virtual salesmen have their value, they still are transcended in value by personal presence or at least the "personal touch." It is important not to automate the presence too much. Instead of Internet presence centered on an impersonal website, MCRC Internet presence must center on the recruitable public and the spread of Marine Recruiters in the field, which acts as a distributed, disseminating network, focused on personal service. **An automated email or virtual interaction, without the personal touch of a Marine Recruiter in the process, eclipses the nature of Marine Corps recruiting and suggests it doesn't take a Marine to recruit a Marine.** Most important, **it takes a "Marine Recruiter" to recruit efficiently and effectively** otherwise there is no professional personal "service" orientation. This includes proper screening and gauging of the prospect's abilities and interests so the brand *Marine* supports their interest. The service end of presence is very important. In fact, 40% of sales through the Internet ultimately fail due to lack of [personal] service.[55] This is probably attributed to the lack of personal presence, either because sales and service in the field was an afterthought in constructing Internet presence, subordinated to an automated Web presence, or the sales effort was unexpectedly eclipsed by another Web focus. A Recruiter-centric network seeks to overcome this deficiency. The focus on a distributed, personal hybrid presence will improve the benefits of the anytime, "always on" virtual presence and ensures the "personal touch" is not subordinated. **It could even be suggested that a marriage between New Age Internet presence and the "high art" of salesmanship, the Marine Recruiter, presents a possible superior means to implement the RBA – a method for other businesses to consider.**

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[55] "E-Commerce Taking in Service Areas for Their Customers," *Marketplace, National Public Radio,* WMAL, 12 December 1999.

Hybridizing and Multitasking the Marine Recruiter

Today, management must become more like leadership; salesmanship must operate in the Internet real-time and anytime milieu; and marketing must maneuver to maintain information dominance through field sales and service representatives. To compete with the civilian job market and make solid relationships with the new Information Age generation, Marine leadership must adapt sets of distributed recruiting teams in a "learn as you go" atmosphere in order to merge into the New Age. The U.S. Army Recruiting Command, in 1998, simply fielded laptop computers, without much training focus, to every Army Recruiter in one of its recruiting brigades. This brigade did not exhibit the average 6% drop in recruitment production all other Army recruiting brigades did.[56] It is an example of the "learn as you go" and "trust the Recruiters" approach.

Moreover, there is a need for the operators, both the leaders and their Recruiters, to develop analyst-type skills in order to navigate through the influx of information and still maintain a strategic and tactical paranoia that will foresee the new recruitable markets' rapidly changing attitudes and meet the need to operate in a real-time, always on, and anytime Internet atmosphere. Speed will have to be applied to ensure the "personal touch" is not deconstructed. In this environment, "speed is life."[57] The valued Internet commodity of speed will require consistent reevaluation and re-capitalization in order to align Marine Recruiter presence with the public. The Marine Recruiters who do this at their own level and apply MCRC national Internet presence artfully with their prospects will have much to gain. In essence, the Recruiters who are searching for the future

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[56] Assistant for Officer Procurement, 1st Marine Corps District email to Commanding Officer, 1st Marine Corps District, "Mid-level Interservice Recruiting Committee Conference Trip Report," 15 March 1999, 2.
[57] "Speed is life. Coined by aviators to describe the winning strategy in dogfights, the Marines were startled o discover the Silicon Valley corporate leaders use exactly the same phrase to describe success at the punishing pace of business on the Net." A *Washington Post* summary from the wargame. F. J. West, "Information Technology Advice From Silicon Valley CEOs," *Marine Corps Gazette,* August 1999, 49.

"strategic corporals" must become "strategic recruiters." They must self–orientate through varying situations using commander's intent with information technology – always focused on the rapidly changing recruitable public. This new call to arms for the Marine Recruiter assimilates advice the Corps received from "15 business leaders from Silicon Valley, including the Chairmen of *Cisco Systems* and *3COM*"— improving your institution's manpower exposure to information technologies should improve productivity.[58]

Marine Recruiters transitioning from a market becoming Internet internalized into a market predominantly Internet internalized will have to act with great flexibility. In one environment, Marine Recruiters will discover the old Systematic Recruiting skills coupled solely with incarnate presence will work. In another environment, a hybrid of the old Systematic Recruiting and the new network skill sets will develop a bond between the Recruiter and the new recruitable generation. In the new and most competitive environment, Marine Recruiters must exemplify the skill sets of the new world and demonstrate that the Information Age skill sets take on superior value when coupled with the traditional core intangibles offered by the Corps. Here the Marine Recruiter will multitask Internet tools and methods. For example, an anonymous prospect, using an Internet appliance, dials-up a Recruiter through the cellular number portrayed on the Marine Recruiter's website. The Recruiter will talk with the prospect and at the same time leverage a browse through an institutional website that the Recruiter feels best supports the prospect's and Recruiter's needs. The institutional Internet presence supports and jells with the Recruiter in the field in a real-time and anytime mode.

Marine Corps recruiting information dominance must not depend on expensive advertising aimed to merely grow public awareness while Marine Recruiters, "in the

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[58] Ibid.

trenches," try to weed out those willing and worth attempting the road less traveled.

Perception control and management must be built on a symbiotic relationship that ties the

recruitable public into the breadth of the Marine Corps online presence – stretching from

the Commandant, into the Fleet Marine Force, out to the "grass roots" Marines in society,

and institutions partnered with the Corps. All, through Internet constructs, can be

converged to ensure the sum of their presence leads a prospect as quickly as possible to a

Marine Recruiter.

Advertising awareness agents, such as television advertising focused on

establishing brand name awareness, have less value than action agents in the Information

Age. Action agents like web site hyperlinks, interactive digital television, emails with

hyperlinks, and online games coax viewers to action.[59] The marriage of online action

agents and interaction agents are the new means to establish brand. The new media

agents must offer a new prospect a choice: 1) immediate interaction with a Recruiter

through real-time incarnate or discarnate presence or 2) anytime interaction with virtual

presence, which sells the Marine Corps and generates high impact interest to engage a

local Marine Recruiter.

The convergence of media forms used in a concurrent fashion with multitasked

presence must become the new way to recruit. Imagine a Marine Recruiter contacting

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[59] The "action agent" emphasis here combines two supporting constructs: access media and interactive media. Regis McKenna is the Chairman of The McKenna Group (mckenna-group.com), a Palo Alto, California-based consulting firm with expertise in the development of information and telecommunications management, marketing, and alliance strategies and wrote the best seller, *Real Time – Preparing for the Age of the Never Satisfied Customer*. McKenna explains, "Access media hold the key to satisfying the consumer's demands for real time results. This is because access media help organizations serve customers better by making it possible for customers to serve themselves." Because the Corps sells "intangibles" through a time tested system of Recruiter's "leading their customers," it is seemingly count-intuitive to allow them to access, interactive media on their own and establish understanding on Marine Corps intangibles. It is the author's belief that a trilogy of Recruiter, Net generation prospect, and new media must be harmonized in order to best support the access media trend vice ignore its alore. Regis Mckenna, *Real Time – Preparing for the Age of the Never Satisfied Customer,* (Boston*: MA*, Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 56.

new prospects through email addresses forwarded by email to the Recruiter by a Marine Corps' "poolee,"[60] a linked institutional web-site, another Marine, or guidance counselor. The Recruiter now has many options: 1) Email a note to the prospect containing a website hyperlink. The website is designed to provide contextual information to the prospect and allow interaction to build knowledge in the brand. Even better, the site can offer "streamed" video preferences conveying the intangible fruits established by the Corps' legendary presence. This allows choice, supports anonymity, builds relationship, and begins an extended Marine Recruiter presence – more personal than receiving an institutional email. 2) Adding to the first option, the prospect can be invited into an Internet chat room where the bonds between poolees and recruiters are prevalent and their values illuminated. This allows discarnate presence to build real-time presence and community. 3) Affording the prospect a telephone number during the chat session, the prospect can call the Recruiter, who can coax the prospect to co-navigate websites, which begins to develop trust through a shared experience. 4) Maybe the prospect can be invited to enter into a Marine Corps virtual role-playing game experience that teaches the importance of the intangibles the Corps is offering. The gaming experience would be designed to cut across the gamut of "strategic corporal" situations where core values, teamwork, leadership, decisiveness, and a plethora of other intangibles carry the greatest weight toward mission success across a matrix of circumstances. Gaming, such as this, can become a "recombinant marketing" tool. The gaming model, focused on allowing prospects to experience the intangible benefits, could help fill the growing void of military experience amongst the recruitable public.[61] During these synergistic

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[60] A "poolee" is a Marine Corps Enlistee who has been completely administratively processed, to include "sworn in," but is awaiting the chance to earn the title *Marine* through graduating from a "boot camp" Transformation process.

[61] Washington, available online at http://www.military.com /News/…/0,10451,38d2b0a8-158b-49,00.htm .

interactions or "hybridizations," the Marine Corps' recruiting network sits astride the

Marine Recruiter sales process, not running it, but offering support and gathering the data

to assist as the relationships build through these "new forms."[62]

In the following Chapter, a prescriptive template is offered to MCRC. It is an

aggressive approach with a simple bottom line – afford the information tools to the

Recruiters, accept the initial deficiencies, and quickly begin to build Marine Recruiter

presence with the recruitable population.

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[62] McCluhan had this to say about "hybrid energy": "The crossings or hybridization of the media release great new force and energy as by fission or fusion. The hybrid or meeting of two media is a moment of truth and revelation from which new form is born." McCluhan 48 – 55.

CHAPTER 4

PRESCRIPTIVE ACTION TOWARD BUILDING THE STRATEGIC RECRUITER NETWORK

The overarching purpose of the new recruiting system is to provide every Marine Recruiter strategic top-sight over the recruitable public's Net presence in order to sell the Corps more effectively at the local level. Strategic top-sight applies Information Age relevancy to the Marine Recruiter so he or she can self-orientate on the Information Age market in conjunction with Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) wide support measures. It enhances the Marine Recruiter by outfitting him or her with the tools and methods of both the revolution in business affairs (RBA) and the Marine Corps' revolution in military affairs (RMA) by procuring off-the-shelf systems. At the same time, the "strategic recruiter" retains the effective recruiting methods so painfully developed over the past three decades and leverages the initiative based *MCDP-1 Warfighting* philosophy. Through the Information Age enhancement of the Marine Recruiter, the Marine Corps exports its RMA to the American public as a positive move forward without deconstructing the nature of a winning recruiting team and organization or ignoring the Internet's disruptive nature. In relation to the other military services, who are creating their own centralized network presences, this effort intends to thrive in the chaos of the rapidly changing Net culture through a self-orientating, initiative based, distributed Marine Recruiter network.

Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) is making some strides toward re-aligning itself in favor of this overarching purpose. In the *FY 00 Marine Corps Recruiting Command, Recruitment Advertising Plan,* MCRC observed the "**contract conversion rate for Internet leads is more than double that of direct mail and more**

than seven times the conversion rate of event leads."[63] Does this impressive factoid

suggest there could be more utility behind Internet efforts to recruit? With this in hand,

MCRC improved the *marines.com* site to include visitors leaving their email addresses.

Unfortunately, as previously mentioned, *marines.com* will not afford prospects

information unless they provide their complete identity. The loss of anonymity is

imposed by the current MCRC website. Relinquishing a full identity is the prerequisite

to begin a MCRC to prospect or Recruiter to prospect exchange. Notwithstanding,

MCRC will implement, in phases, a very good centralized and hierarchal effort to "warm

up" the cold call for the Recruiter. In return for the initial information, an email

confirmation will reach the prospect, metric analysis on the data will be captured, and a

Marine Recruiter receive referral information by phone or facsimile. Since the majority

of Marine Recruiters do not have email capability, the turn around time to receive

information is at best within 24-hours. A method of web-based virtual recruiting will aim

at getting the prospect to see the Recruiter in person. The prospect will also be able to

"slingshot" an email to a friend enticing the recipient to hyperlink back to the Corps'

virtual site (a "viral" marketing technique).   A new vendor will ensure virtual, Internet

metric top-sight is available in a centralized and hierarchal manner. Also, promotion

banners are being made available to hyperlink with the centralized Internet presence. The

highlight of the whole effort is the partnership with an excellent website creation

company, *Macquarium*, which has the capability to eventually assist in the optimum

solution for Marine Recruiter Internet presence.[64] Though MCRC's effort doesn't

fundamentally provide the presence the Corps needs in the future, it is an effective means

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[63] Marine Corps Recruiting Command and *J. Walter Thompson* Pamphlet, 16.

[64] Ibid, 15-29.

to ensure the Marine Corps has a centralized Internet presence until it begins to transition toward a Recruiter-centric, Internet presence.

Another recent Marine Corps development hits closer to the necessary Internet presence baseline developed in this thesis. *Project Tun Tavern* is a joint Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory (MCWL) and MCRC effort to determine how Recruiters might better use information technology (IT). It is intended to investigate the gamut of IT media tools and the potential for individual Recruiter real-time, discarnate, virtual, and always on Internet and cellular wireless presence. This, in many ways, demonstrates an earnest effort toward replacing the current MCRC policy stunting Internet presence. Though the impetus for this project did not originate with MCRC, the command will hopefully grow to understand the importance of it and take action.[65] At least there is currently a project focused on the Marine Recruiter and concentrated on the tools of the Information Age. This effort has great potential and speaks directly to the fundamental equipment required to outfit a "strategic recruiter."

To align the current MCRC and MCWL efforts with the overall proposed purpose, the following three, one-year phases, are proposed. It is recommended the first phase focus on the Officer Selection Officers (OSO). The OSOs' college market is almost completely internalized on the Internet[66] providing a means for large-scale prototype testing. Also, the OSOs constitute a good "learn as you go" distribution network that does not immediately burden the overworked enlisted recruiting force. OSO's should be equipped with digital cellular devices and the *marineofficer.com* site must return to being

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[65] Dennis Ingram, Captain, USMC, Information Systems Management and Tun Tavern Project Officer, Marine Corps Warfighting Lab, interview by author, 31 March 2000.
[66] The author spent three years 1996-1999 running Marine Corps officer procurement efforts from West Virginia through Maine. It was very much apparent that college students spent much time on the Internet. "Up to 90 percent of college students have access to the Internet and repeated research has found that they are very comfortable with new technology." "Marketers Vie for College Market," *San Jose Mercury*

an enabler for OSO, personal, real-time, anytime, and always on Net presence. During this phase, *marineofficer.com* should be reconfigured to ensure real-time and anytime access to the OSO. This phase will shape the "strategic recruiter" concept by allowing one division to test, critique, and model Internet presence with multitasking equipment, inclusive of current Systematic Recruiting methods. The approach utilizes the advice offered by the Silicon Valley CEO's – "accept the deficiencies and deploy a large-scale prototype."[67]

Concurrently, a "tiger team"of representatives from MCRC and partnering vendors, including representatives from Marine Corps recruiting training branches, Headquarters Marine Corps Public Affairs and C^4I (Command, Control, Communication, Computers and Intelligence) Directorate, Achieve Global (current Marine Corps vendor for outsourced sales training support), and Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory should construct doctrine, organization, training, equipment, and supporting establishment templates. Also, a partnership with the MIT Media Laboratory for a fellowship program (one Marine officer per year) must be initiated in order to build intellectual capital within the Corps. The fellowship's mission is to provide MCRC staff officers the ability to develop recruiting methods that account for the RBA's disruptive technologies and trends. Essential to all efforts is the need to operate in a secure but public Internet access friendly environment, where speed and anonymity remain shared and valued commodities between the Marine Recruiters and the recruitable public. The C^4I Directorate must support a commercial, "non-.mil," based system of Internet access, for the Recruiter, outside the constrained and restrained Defense Data Network that is still

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News, 6 September 1999, available online at
http://www.nua.ie/surveys/index.cgi?f=VS&art_id=905355255&rel=true .
[67]West 49.

secure but seamlessly interactive with the public and cost saving, robust commercial architecture.

The second phase must combine the lessons learned, accept some of the deficiencies, and deploy a large-scale prototype system to all recruiters in four Marine Corps recruiting stations, which have strong Internet and cellular demographics. Internet presence will be granted down to the individual recruiter, using virtual and discarnate Web practices. Vendor mobile training teams will support in-stride recruiting station training as well as the training of all recruiting district contact teams[68] and information management personnel. Concurrently, MCRC and the MCWL efforts must assist in interlocking Marine Recruiter presence with community and institutional presence in order to build online credibility through community association. Role-playing games and hyperlinks with Corps' supporters like *ESPN* are just some examples. Training Periods of Instruction (POI's) must be developed for use at Marine Corps' recruiting courses. It is important to keep it simple and use commercial-based constructs as much as possible (i.e. AOL accounts costing $20 a month per Marine Recruiter could support an email and website virtual presence capability and regional, digital cellular phone service can afford discarnate presence). Commercial Internet service providers and cellular service providers often offer service support and training assistance inclusive of standard costs for service.

The final phase will be the implementation of the system throughout the recruiting force. Every Marine Recruiter, at a minimum, should have wireless discarnate presence (if wireless digital cellular is not available in the operating area, analog cellular or an advanced paging system will substitute) as well as an email, and personal website virtual

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[68] Marine Corps recruiting contact teams conduct recruiting operation assessments and sustainment training throughout the MCRC recruiting force.

presence on the Internet. Every new Marine Recruiter must be trained to multitask with the new tools and value the hybridized presence. Individual Recruiter website presence must be established first using a standard template. MCRC policy should support and encourage regional and local oversight and modification in order to grow discarnate and virtual presence. How each Recruiter utilizes Internet presence will vary personally and regionally.

The focus of this thesis stayed away from establishing a cost basis for implementing its constructs. However, to put the matter of cost into perspective, the following point establishes a reasonable and affordable expectation. As previously stated, it costs the Marine Corps an average of $6,000 to recruit each enlistee. Each year, every Recruiter is expected to contract 24 enlistees who earn the title Marine. In my estimation, having purchased and fielded equipment for OSOs during a previous recruiting tour, the cost of one recruit, $6000, would provide more than enough funding to field "strategic recruiter" Web presence to a Marine Recruiter. The development and cost of supporting Internet presence such as games requires greater research. However, an innovative approach would be to use the Marine Corps' gaming simulation software that is being constructed to support training the Marine Corps' "strategic corporals" or the imbedded simulation tools that will train our Marines on new equipment. Terry J. Bennington, of GAMA Corporation, which services the MCWL with simulation tools and research, agreed that this was a suitable idea, from a software and network standpoint, worth review.[69]

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[69] Terry J. Bennington, Chief Instructor, GAMA Corporation, Springfield, VA, interview by author, 23 February 2000.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis is to move the Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) into trusting the Marine Recruiter with Information Age tools in order to make him or her more productive through a personal Internet presence. The power of this Internet presence is its focus on the values of the Marine Recruiter and the growing recruitable "Internet Generation." MCRC currently has an Internet presence that does not support this focus.

In a greater sense, this thesis is about an institution, currently the incumbent in its field of effort, adopting considerable change. This thesis recommends recognizing the main instrument for change, the Internet, and how the Internet is and can impact the military recruiting ecosystem. The record shows the Marine Corps has been able to inculcate change, including non-traditional practices. However, if change evolves too slowly, like it did for Marine Corps recruiting in the 1970's, the Marine Corps may suffer.

The current recruiting, retention, and market trends, exhibited in this thesis, suggests the Marine Corps should grow its presence to recruit the quality out of the current in-coming recruitable market. The in-coming recruitable generation has values, which rhyme with the Corps'. This "Internet Generation" not only has the tools to support the Corps' revolution of military affairs (RMA), it exhibits values the Corps appreciates. Investing in this generation begins with ensuring the recruiting force is relevant to the market it intends to recruit. Through re-capitalizing the Marine Recruiter, by allowing and building efficient, personal Internet presence between the Recruiter and prospects, the Marine Corps is taking the most important step toward change, the RMA, and "enhancing the Marine" to meet the Corps' future challenges.

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